



" Feci nec quod pot^{ui}, nec quod vol^{ui} ".


(It is neither as I would nor as it should be).



Carlyle and Michelet compared as Historians and as
Men of Letters.

Of late years there has been much dispute concerning the function of the historian, and whether history is an art, or a science; whether it should be treated as literature or whether it should be alienated from it ; whether history should only instruct and be regarded from a purely utilitarian point of view, or whether it should tell a story in the most interesting manner possible. Some contend that it should be treated as a science like mathematics, the calculation of cause and effect being the main objective; any attempts at endowing Clio with the gifts of her more prepossessing sisters is sternly to be avoided. Lord Morley tells us, " I do not in the least want to know, what happened in the past, except as it enables me to see my way more clearly through what is happening to-day . " Professor ^{Seely} ~~Seely~~, probably the most able exponent of this point of view, says, " It is a favorite ^u maxim of mine that history , while it

should be scientific in its method, should pursue a practical object, - that is, it should ,.....modify the reader's views of the present, and his forecast of the future. "

He goes on to tell us that " history fades into mere literature when it loses sight of its relation to practical politics . " He declares that the scanty progress of historical research in England was caused by the prevalence there of literary rather than of scientific methods, history being reduced to a narrative only fit to amuse the curiosity of children. The true historian is no teller of tales; he is an inquirer into the laws governing the State. In short , history is to be treated as a Blue - book for the politician.

Both Carlyle and Michelet are strong opponents of this point of view. The former says, " The time seems coming when he who sees no world but that of courts and camps, and writes only how, this ministerial conjurer out-conjured that other ... will pass for a more or less instructive Gazetteer, but will no longer be called an Historian . " He maintains that history is the true epic poem; not a mere record of political conduct, nor even the writing of a mere story, but that " the highest Shakespeare producible is properly the fittest Historian producible, and it is frightful to see the Dryasdust doing the function of History, and

the Shakespeare and Goethe neglecting it." He considers history to be not only the doings of man on this planet, but also a clear manifestation of the Hand of God, guiding and shaping the destinies of the Universe.

Michelet's view is neither that of Professor Seeley, nor that of Carlyle. He explains his method by five words; - "L' Histoire est une Resurrection". He differs from Professor Seeley in that the latter wishes acts and their actors to be carefully examined as in a dissecting-room; Michelet wishes to make them live again. Although resembling Carlyle's method, it is not exactly the same. Michelet does not attempt to show a Divine Providence watching over all, but to reproduce the past in its entirety -- not only the actors in the drama, but the scenery as well.

As he himself said in his preface to the Histoire de France. " France -----elle avait des annales et non point une histoire. Des hommes éminents l'avaient étudiée surtout au point de vue politique. Nul n'avait pénétré dans l'infini détail des développements divers de son activité. Nul ne l'avait encore embrassé du regard dans l'unité vivante des éléments qui l'ont constituée. Le premier je la vis comme une âme et une personne. " To do this he had to study France not only from the standpoint of history but also of geography religion, arts, science, and even commerce.

The intellectual ~~monsters~~ ^{ancestors} of Carlyle are so diverse that anything more than a superficial investigation is impossible. As John Nichol points out, Carlyle had a great affinity to his countryman Lord Byron. Both had for their theme a contempt of society and shams, but while Byron too frequently spoke from personal enmity, Carlyle was always magnificently impersonal. His power of minutely portraying human nature, and more especially the darker side, may be said to resemble Swift, his humour was essentially Rabelaisian. But undoubtedly his most obvious literary parents were Goethe and the German romantic school exemplified by Jean Paul Richter, many of whose characteristics he absorbed.

But, after all, anything that Carlyle derived from others was a very small part in comparison with his original genius, and is of very little importance in estimating his historical or literary achievements. The foreign elements merely coloured his work, they did not alter the substance. Although Carlyle possessed some of the characteristics of a school, he did not belong to any school.

This is by no means the same in the case of Michelet, although both writers were Romantics, the influences which went to make the latter ~~parent~~ ^{parent} far more definite than in the case of Carlyle. In his work we find that not only has he certain characteristics in common with other writers, but also that his virtues and vices are directly traceable to his af-

finity with the Romantic movement. Begun by Chateaubriand and Lamartine, this great revolution in art culminated in some of the greatest names in French literature ----- Victor Hugo, De Musset, De Vigny, Dumas, and many others. This great movement in poetry, drama, fiction, and philosophy, found its natural counterpart in history. Michelet was the historian of the Romantic movement. It will be found that he is primarily an historian who turned aside to fiction, (*La Sorcière*) to natural history, (*L' Oiseau*, *L' Insecte*) to studies of human nature, (*L'Amour*, *La Femme*,) to religious controversy, (*Le Prêtre*) purely as a diversion from his larger and more important works; and, more than that, his claim to immortality rests mainly on one work, - "*L'Histoire de France*". It occupied him for nearly forty years of his life, and, with all its imperfections, and faults, remains the finest history of France in existence, and one of the finest histories of modern times. It is veritably an epoch-making work. There few things like it in literature; few parallels to such tenacity of purpose.

At the time at which he was starting to write, there was, as an effect, of the Romantic movement, a renewed interest in the obscure Middle Ages. It was partly an intellectual curiosity, but it was probably more on account of the wonderful poetry and fascination of the olden times. Here Michelet was earliest on the field, and he seems to have been the first

to treat the Middle Ages in anything but a scientific spirit. His account is still by far the most vivid and picturesque, though there may be others that are more reliable.

Consequently the first part of the history is the most interesting and original. It shows the writer's talents to the best advantage. The more remote the times ~~are~~ of which he is writing, the more sympathetic he is; the nearer the period, the more acrid and vituperative he becomes. In writing of recent events, his political prejudices submerge the historian, but in early times he had fewer opportunities of taking sides.

But even in the first volume we see the beginnings of his violent prejudices. One would expect that the grand and shadowy figure of Charlemagne would have awakened the historians' enthusiasm, or at least his interest; but on the contrary, this wonderful man leaves him singularly unmoved. The same thing is to be found throughout the history. Even the noble and heroic character of Henri IV, the greatest of all the French kings, seems to arouse his antipathy, he cannot forgive him for being king.

There is one passage which is an exception. It is, in fact the only passage in which he brings the great Emperor before us, and gives us ^{the} atmosphere of the sublime old Chanson de Roland. The passage in question is that in which Charlemagne sees the Scandinavian ships approaching:

" L' empereur, s'étant levé de table, se mit à la fenêtre qui regardait l' orient, et demeura là longtemps, le visage inondé de larmes ' Savez - vous, mes fidèles pourquoi je pleure amèrement? je m' afflige profondément de ce que, moi vivant, ils ont été près de toucher ce rivage, et je suis tourmenté d'une violente douleur quand je prévois tout ce qu'ils feront de maux à mes neveux et à leurs peuples! Aussi rodent déjà autour de l'empire les flottes danoises, grecques et sarrasines, come le vapeur plane sur le mourant qui promet un. cadavre". Here Michelet speaks as if he were an actual eye - witness, and saw the tears silently rolling down the old Conquerer's worn face.

There is some fine phrase - making here, forged on the anvil of Victor Hugo. It is especially noticeable in the "superb tableau de France" which he gives us in the second volume, such as the following, culled at random. "Les Basques, les Catalans, et les Roussillonnais, sont les portiers des deux mondes Ils ouvrent à Abderame, ils ferment à Roland, il y a bien de tombeaux entre Ronceaure et la Seu d'Urgel "

This superb little fragment illustrates Michelet's power of conveying the spirit of mediaevalism in a few words. In this he is probably unequalled except by Browning. The grim and haunting suggestiveness of the last phrase is wonderful.

" La Provence, dans son imparfaite destinée, dans sa forme incomplète, me semble un chant des troubadours, un canzone de Petrarque..... La poésie de ce destin du Midi semble

reposer dans la mélancolie de *Vaucluse*, dans la trestesse ineffable et sublime de la Sainte Baume, d' où l'on voit les Alpes et les Cevennes, *La Lang*uedoc et la Provence au delà la Méditerranée. Et moi aussi, j' y pleurerais comme Pétrarque, au moment de quitter ces belles contrées."

This is an example of Michelet's gentle and pensive lyrical note in which he challenges comparison with *De* Musset and Lamartine. But one of the finest word-pictures in the work occurs when Michelet reaches Lorraine, and looks across into the heart of that other great empire, and loses himself in contemplating the grand old Rhine with its romantic myths and legends. "La langue française s'arrête en Lorraine, et je n'irai pas au delà. Je m' ~~obstiens~~ ^{montagne} de franchir la ~~montagne~~, de regarder l' Alsace. Le monde germanique est dangereux pour moi. Il y a là un tout puissant ~~lotus~~ qui fait oublier la patrie. Si je vous découvrais, divine flèche de Strasbourg, si j' apercevais mon héroïque Rhin, je pourrais bien m' en aller au courant du fleuve, bercé par leurs légendes, vers la rouge Cathédrale de Mayence, vers celle de Cologne, et jusqu'à l' Ocean; ~~où~~ peut-être resterais-je ^{enchanté} ~~sechant~~ aux limites solennelles des deux empires, aux ruines de quelque camp romain, de quelque fameuse église de pèlerinage ... qui passa trois cent ans à écouter l'oiseau de la forêt".

The writer is here so completely carried away that he seems to forget that he is writing a history and not a prose poem.

He excuses himself by saying that the country is not merely the Theatre of action - "Par la nourriture, le climat etc. il y influe de cent manières, *Tel le nid, Tel l'oiseau, Telle la patrie, tel l'homme.*" ---- but it is obviously a piece of pure description, one of the most exalted poems in the French language. The introduction of this into history may be questioned by the scorers of mere literature, but we would not willingly give it up for all the scientific researches of Seeley and Stubbs. Anyone with sufficient perseverance can dig up a spadeful of dull facts, but few can give us such a noble piece of writing. It is written straight from the heart and is instinct with life and fervour. It is more like a poet describing his mistress, than an historian describing a country. This curio^us love of personification is one of Michelet's most salient characteristics, and it is once more derived from the Romantic School, more especially from Victor ^{Hugo,} ~~Hugo~~ the Actual treatment of history, Michelet's method is that of the dramatist; his talent for placing figures in striking relief is unparalleled except perhaps by Carlyle. To take a particular example. After the repeated defeats of the French at Poitiers, Crecy and Calais, he describes the utter prostration and the unrelieved agonies of France. Then against this sombre back - ground rises the divine figure of Joan of Arc, Saviour of France, -- not the mere 'Mascotte' militaire of Anatole France, but a radiant and glowing vision of saintliness, so real and yet so sublime that all attempts

criticism fly to the winds.

Nor is this the only quality of the dramatist that he possesses; his whole art is dramaturgic. His great history could easily be divided up into acts and scenes. The passages which shine out so wondrously are generally hinged together by long stretches of bald and flimsy narrative, in which the historian has obviously taken so little interest that he has hardly informed himself on the period and indeed has only written it to form a continuous history. On such occasions, — and they are many, — the narrative is but the barest outline, and is, in reality, only an undigested series of notes. He bounds along, skipping ^{epochs} ~~epochs~~ with a most appalling lack of proportion, to dwell at length on an episode of a few days. Too frequently he lapses into turgid eloquence and bombastic and empty thought. As his enthusiasm wanes or increases, so does the quality of his writing. He is incapable of any sustained effort unless the subject interests him, for without it he cannot bring his imagination into play, so necessary for resurrection. He possesses the imagination of a poet, but it requires the touch of enthusiasm to warm it into life. His passionate adoration for France is responsible for some of the noblest pages in the French language.

"J'ai passé à côté du monde et j'ai pris l'histoire pour la vie. La voici écoulée. Je ne regrette rien, je ne demande rien. Eh! que demanderais-je, chère France, avec qui j'ai vécu, que je quitte à si grand regret! Dans quelle communauté

"j'ai passé avec toi quarante années (Dix siècles) ! Que de heures passionnées, nobles, austères nous eûmes ensemble souvent, l'hiver même, avant l'^{aube} ~~cane~~. Que de jours de labeur et d'étude au fond des Archives ! Je travaillais pour toi, j'allais, venais, cherchais, écrivais. Je donnais chaque jour de moi-même tout, peut-être encore plus. Le lendemain matin, te trouvant à ma table, je me croyais le même fort de ta vie puissante, et de ta jeunesse éternelle, " and later on, "Ma grande France, s'il a fallu pour retrouver ta vie, qu'un homme se donnât, passât et repassât tout de fois le fleuve des morts, il s'en console, te remercie encore. Et son plus grand chagrin est qu'il faut te quitter ici".

In fact, the whole work was wrought out of a burning love and patriotism.

Carlyle is quite different. His finest histories are universal rather than national. His greatest work, Frederick the Great, is an account of the foundation of the Prussian monarchy, and consequently of the German Empire. Carlyle was not driven to seek his subjects for reason of patriotism or romantic value, and not entirely for their historical interest. Although he would probably have been the last to admit it, he chose his subjects, whether consciously or unconsciously, to illustrate his theories. He chose Oliver Cromwell not on account of his nationality, not necessarily but because he thought him vitally interesting, to enforce his idea of the great, strong man, self-reliant and despotic. He

chose Frederick the Great, not because he admired him very much, — "I never was admitted much to Friedrich's confidence, and I never cared much about him", —, but to give an example of the Hero as king, to give vent to his growing hatred of democracy, and to prove his contention that the race of heroes was extinct, Frederick being the last of them. Secondly, Carlyle differs from Michelet in that his reputation does not rest to such a great extent purely on his historical and biographical work; he is quite as much a critic and philosopher as an historian. Furthermore, his reputation as historian is not founded so entirely on one work, but is more evenly distributed over three large works, all of equally great merit.

In his chef d'oeuvre Frederick the Great, Carlyle failed, but in failing he has produced a wonderful work. When he began it, he thought he had found an example of the Hero as King. It was only when it was too late that he discovered that Frederick was not a hero at all, but was guided by what Frederick himself called a "vulpine morality". His attempt to prove that unsympathetic, and in many ways petty man, a hero, was bound to end in failure from the moral point of view, but from the point of view of art and history it is a masterpiece.

Nominally "Frederick the Great" and "Oliver Cromwell" are biographies, but actually they are histories. Although

the two men are undoubtedly the central figures of their respective pictures, the canvases are too large to be occupied solely with them. The background is as important as the foreground. Consequently, to write Oliver Cromwell, Carlyle had to inform himself thoroughly on the Civil War in all its stages. In Frederick he had to write the history of Europe in the 18th Century, to say nothing of a preliminary picture of Germany in the Middle Ages. Hence their claim to be regarded as histories.

From every standpoint Frederick the Great is a remarkable achievement. The accumulation of facts is so enormous and the author's researches so successful that from the point of view of Dryasdust too it is almost perfect. From the point of view of the biographer it is ideal. Frederick is so wonderfully painted both mentally and physically that at the end of the book we seem to know him as well as one of our oldest friends. From the point of view of literature it can claim to be considered the greatest prose work of the 19th Century.

If we examine the work more closely, the first thing we shall notice is the wonderfully consistent brilliance of the book. From first page to last of this intricate and involved scheme, there is not one that is dull or badly thought out. The interest is unflagging throughout the whole work. In this he greatly excels the French writer, who

is capable of magnificent and striking moments , but is incapable of the sustained unity of Carlyle's work. For example nothing can be finer than such passages as the " tableau de France " and the episodes of Joan of Arc, the Camisards and the Templars, but it never extends to a whole volume such as the first volume of Frederick. It is strong and level, there are no episodes one can detach on account of the unified flow of the whole. Carlyle has of course many outstanding passages in his work. These are generally to be found when the subject affords him greater scope. It might perhaps be said that Carlyle's narrative rises and falls with the subject, while Michelet only excels himself if the subject is near to his heart. As we have before mentioned, one frequently finds him commonplace at the very moments that would inspire most writers.

On account of the continuity of the works quotations are almost impossible, even if they were desirable. There are few passages that can be detached from their context less than a page long.

The battle pictures in Frederick are some of the finest in existence, and far surpassing the matter-of -fact descriptions of Michelet. Carlyle had a positive genius for strategy, and it has been asserted that ^{he} Carlyle might have been a fine general if things had so come about. Not only are they correct

from a military point of view but the graphic realism and excitement of them is marvellous; they have even been compared with Homer. In fact *Frederick* the Great is a prose epic.

This brings us to a curious point of resemblance and also of difference between the two writers. Both Carlyle and Michelet, with the gift of rhythm would have been great poets. The difference is, that while Carlyle is epic, Michelet is lyric. The former resembles Homer, the latter Virgil; the one is more Titanic and rough-hewn, while the other is smoother and more cultured. The Frenchman's love of nature is a conspicuous feature of his writings whether historical or purely literary, but it is the actual ^{universe} earth with its earth, sea, sky, mountains, and living things that he loves. But Carlyle, on the contrary does not only mean by nature "The smooth walks, trimmed hedges, butterflies, posies, and nightingales of the English poets", but also "The whole orb with its geologic history, the Kosmos that rolls through the illimitable areas " (Walt Whitmann) This is especially noticeable in *Sartor Resartus*.

The Life and Letters of Oliver Cromwell was written ~~by~~ ⁱⁿ an entirely different method from that of *Frederick*. While in the latter the author constantly pleads for his hero, in *Oliver Cromwell*, his personal views are silent. In this work the hero speaks for himself almost entirely, by means of his

letters and speeches. Another important point to notice about it is, that, like Frederick, it is of real scientific, as well as of literary value. It put an end once and for all to the prevailing popular opinion concerning Cromwells' Character, and consequently threw a new light on his acts and achievements. Before the writing of this book, Cromwell had constantly been held up by competent historians as a monster of iniquity. Probably no figure in history has ever been so misrepresented and vilified by prejudiced historians, with the possible exception of Lucrezia Borgia.

For these two reasons, ---- namely, almost entire lack of the personal element, and scientific value, many people consider it his finest and most balanced work, although it is far from being his most popular. This is probably due to the comparative absence of picturesque writing which is such a noteworthy characteristic. A striking exception is the wonderful description of the night before the battle of Dunbar. We shall quote a part of it here for it will demonstrate Carlyle's epical method in opposition to Michélet's Lyricism.

" The night is wild and wet the Harvest Moon wades deep among the clouds of sleet and hail. We English have some tents the Scots have none. The Hoarse sea moans bodeful swinging low and heavy against these whinstone bays; the sea and the tempests are abroad, all else asleep but we and there is One who rides on the wings of the wind".

Michelet never really conquered his personal feelings sufficiently to write a whole important work unmarred by prejudice; he had not as much self - restraint as the English writer. In his early works, the largest of which is the *Histoire Romaine*, that fatal tendency of his is not so noticable, but similarly none of his genuine characteristics are noticable. It was his first large work, and while displaying many fine qualities it seems to lack something. The absence of the enthusiastic patriotism is probably the main cause of its failure. In fact none of Michelet's historical work other than that dealing with France, lacks distinction.

But after all it is in the French Revolution that both writers, meet on common ground, although the paths which led ^{there} them were different.

In 1845 Michelet interrupted *L'Histoire de France* at the end of the reign of Louis XI, and turned to write his *Histoire de la Revolution Francaise*. He did this because he did not consider that he could ^{properly} ~~probably~~ interpret the events of the succeeding centuries without establishing in himself the faith of the people, -----a statement which shows how much importance he attached to impersonal methods of writing history.

After finishing his revolution he reverted to his Middle Ages again with joy. "Quand je revis mon Moyen Age, cette mer superbe de sottises, une hilarite me prit, et, au XVI,

* au XVII siècle je fis une terrible fête; Rabelais et Voltaire ont ri dans leurs tombeaux, les dieux crevés, les rois pourris, ont apparu sans voile " etc.,

In the same way that the great composer Richard Wagner, interrupted the work of his life, the Ring, to write a shorter but intenser work, so Michelet interrupted his Histoire de France to write his Histoire de la Revolution Francaise. Although many people count it as part of the larger work, we prefer to consider it a separate work altogether. Not only is it entirely out of proportion with the former, but also the method and opinions of the two differ greatly. The whole conception is a new one. The writer's kindly, tolerant, and even affectionate regard for the Church in the earlier volumes is replaced by a stream of virulent invective. Hitherto he had been content to throw a curious light on facts, but in the later book he begins to alter the facts themselves.

In fact, Michelet, in writing his history of the Revolution, allowed the politician to gain the upper hand; only occasionally does the historian appear. He did not try to write a history of the Revolution as much as a vindication of Democracy. With distressing monotony the Revolutionaries are heroes and the Aristocrats villains. Therogné de Mericourt, undoubtedly a fine, courageous woman, but nevertheless only a common prostitute, is placed almost on the level of Joan of Arc, while Charlotte Corday exhibits all

the most vicious tendencies of an abandoned and criminal nature.

Carlyle, in writing ~~this~~ work, wished to show that the Revolution was the breaking of a great imposture, and that the whole social scheme of France was rotten to the core. Up to this point both agree, but here is the difference. While Michelet tells us that it is not any king in particular who is responsible for the miserable state of affairs, but the fault of the fundamental idea of kingship and monarchical rule, Carlyle holds that it is on account of bad rulers, individuals, especially Louis XV. While the former considers that it was the revolt of Democracy against Tyranny, and the objection of the people to be ruled by any king, the latter shows them to be merely dissatisfied with bad rulers, and desiring better ones. In his own words "Cannot one discern across all democratic turbulencethat this is at bottom the wish and prayer of all human hearts everywhere, "Give me a leader"?"

At the conclusion of his sixth volume Michelet says "De la première ^{à la} page ~~au~~ dernière, elle n'a qu'un héros, le peuple". Together with the quotation just made, the following may be taken as embodying Carlyle's mature outlook on politics. "As I take it, Universal History, the history of what man has accomplished in this world, is at bottom the History of the Great Men who have lived there". He considers that democracies must be ably led, or their

their energies will be wholly destructive; that in the French Revolution, the excesses of the Terror were in direct consequence of the people having no adequate leadership.

Michelet's history is much larger than Carlyle's, and, owing to the greater facilities which the former enjoyed in amassing his material is generally more accurate in the statement of facts. Carlyle, on the other hand, was not quite as accurate as he was to become in his later works. The most well-known example of this is the episode of the sinking of the "Vengeur", which he did not discover to be a hoax until the publication of the second edition.

In Michelet's volumes, the contrast of his exactness in such matters with his appallingly prejudiced misrepresentation of them, has long been a matter for wonderment. He has introduced his personal feelings to such an alarming extent that it has seriously impaired the value of his work. Carlyle, although notorious in this respect, is here as nothing compared to the French writer. It is easy to see that his sympathies are with the insurrection, but this never blinds ~~hi~~^{is} him to the good quality of its opponents.

There is one very curious and interesting point to notice in this connection. Among the few occasions on which Michelt shows any sympathy for the Royalist cause, the most striking is the Opera supper scene, he seems genuinely moved by it, while on this occasion Carlyle has no sympathy. He does not fail to see through the theatricality of the episode; he

sees that the moving factor was not so much enthusiasm and affection for the king as too much wine. He refers contemptuously to the "pot-valorous speech", "empty feather-heads", "tempest-tost state of vanity" etc. In fact, it will be found almost invariably that Carlyle sees deeper into the true nature of the event; Michelet is more easily satisfied with externals. In describing the Feast of Pikes, the Gallic spirit of Michelet soaks itself in transports of enthusiasm, but the sterner northern writer sees the emptiness and foolishness of the whole affair. When there is talk of admitting the citizens by tickets, he grumbles "Did we take the Bastille by tickets"?

Michelet's characteristics are thoroughly French. His eloquence, his fire, his sarcasm, his enthusiasm, his prejudices - all reveal his nationality. None of these qualities go to make the ideal historian, while some are directly opposite. It is probably for this reason, - namely, that the typically French qualities are not conducive to the writing of good history - that France has never produced an historian of the calibre of Thucydides, Livy, Tacitus, Josephus, Gibbon, or in comparatively recent times, Sismondi, Villari or Ranke. There is always in the Frenchman's works too much of the personal element to produce masterpieces of such an impersonal nature as history.

Nevertheless there are many fine things in Michelet's Rev:

olution. The introductory chapters are probably about the best in the work. The picture of the trusting people putting their faith first in the Church and then in the Monarchy, only to be deceived by each in turn, is cleverly painted. With fine sarcasm he defines the two ruling powers as "Deux puissances paternelles; la paternité ecclésiastique, caractérisée par l'Inquisition, la paternité monarchique, par ^{le} Livre Rouge, et par la Bastille"..... Of the Livre Rouge he says "Il prendra les charités pour l'incendie et la grêle, il ira jusqu'à voler la caisse des hôpitaux. La France est en bonne main. Tout va bien. Un si bon roi, une si aimable reine."

It is the same throughout the book, the same insistence on the baseness of royalty and aristocracy, passing over with a grudging word of praise the many fine men of the Royalist cause, such as Bouille, to lavish panegyrics on such men as Robespierre and Saint-Just. He does not even do the Girondins justice, men such as Isnard, Vergniaud, Barbaroux, and others most of whom were finer men than their enemies of the Mount: main.

It has frequently been said of both Carlyle and Michelet that they wrote as if they were witnesses, so real is their narrative. But there is a difference. Michelet is not only a witness; he is actually taking part in the drama. He is there at the Bastille, fighting with the revolutionaries, sharing their hopes and elated at their victories, At the

end of each chapter or act, he remains behind to soliloquise like Hamlet at the end of Shakespeare's drama, such as the following, "La nuit était avancée, il était deux heures. Elle emportait, cette nuit, l'immense et pénible songe des mille ^{ans} ~~aux~~ du moyen âge. L'aube qui commença bientôt était celle de la Liberté.....Depuis cette merveilleuse nuit, plus de classes des Français, plus de provinces, une France! Vive la France!"

Carlyle is more like a spectator than an actor, looking down from a window on to the struggling mass. While Michelet can only see his comrades, Carlyle, by reason of his elevation can see and appreciate both sides; although in his mind he may favour one party, he is not blind to its defects, or to the virtues of its opponents. He can see further and wider than his rival. Occasionally his eye wanders from the seething mass of humanity, to dwell lovingly for an instant on some beautiful scene, or allows himself to be transported back to some remoter time, seeing the Revolution only as an episode, as but one act in the divine drama of man.

This breadth of view gives the English writer an overwhelming advantage over the Frenchman, although the latter also gains, but not to such an extent, by realising the tremendous enthusiasm and vitality of the people, a quality which Carlyle undoubtedly under-estimated. He always regarded the

People more as a mere herd of brute beasts, - as doubtless they frequently are, - than as a multitude bound together by unanimity and patriotism, as they were in the French Revolution. Carlyle conceives the People as a vast number of individuals, not the one individual of Michelet's conception, - a noble idea but one that is often erroneous. In his frenzied attempts to prove that it was always true, the latter frequently set his foot on dangerous quicksands.

In recounting the assault of the Bastille, Michelet tells us:- "Une idée se leva sur Paris avec le jour, et tous virent la même lumière. Une lumière dans les esprits et dans chaque coeur, une voix. 'Va et tu prendras la Bastille' Personne ne proposa....."and later on, still more emphatic, "personne, je le repète, ne donna l'impulsion" On referring to Carlyle's history, we find the following. "But see Camille Desmoulins, from the Café de Foy, rushing by..... his hair streaming, in each hand a pistol: - "friends shall we die like hunted hares?.....the hour has come..... To Arms!"

This is not exactly the same account as Michelet's. Which is the correct version? On account of the greater facilities before stated, it was thought that Michelet's version would be more likely to be correct; but nevertheless other authorities were consulted, the majority of which gave the same account as Carlyle. Here Michelet was led by his

political zeal to perpetrate a distinct breach of faith, If he did not do it deliberately, it could only have been done without real knowledge of the facts. This is not likely, but even were it true, it is probably as great a fault as deliberately to deceive.

We do not think that Carlyle ever intentionally distorted facts. A careful examination of his historical works failed to give evidence of anything more than misconception. He never concealed anything detrimental^{al} to his heroes. On the contrary, he was so afraid of this that he often over-emphasised their faults. He makes no attempt to hide the frequent tergiversations of Frederick, or in any way to modify the cruelties of the Protector, the darker side of Mirabeau, or the occasional weakness of Danton. It is true that he sometimes erred in the delineation of characters, but it is easy to see that it was not intentional. Carlyle had no talent for psychology. He could always recognise worth and merit, but he was incapable of analysing thoroughly complex characters, such as Robespierre. He was thoroughly at home in depicting men such as Mirabeau, or Danton, who were large, heroic, and composed of a few outstanding elements with very little detail. Subtlety of any kind bewildered Carlyle. Consequently, in portraying Robespierre, he was unable to see anything in him but a weak and miserable fanatic without the courage of his convictions, or even of his

vices - such as Marat. He could not understand how a man could think one thing and act another, and therefore failed to grasp the really fine man in Robespierre for whom one must not search in his actions but in his inner thoughts. Carlyle afterwards admitted to Professor Masson that he had underestimated Robespierre's intellect. The same thing is to be observed in the delineation of all complex characters and especially ^{of} women. In depicting the latter he employs the same methods as with Danton or Mirabeau, leaving out all detail, and being consequently compelled to exaggerate the more outstanding traits. Charlotte Corday for example, though not the criminal shown by Michelet, was not entirely the divine figure that Carlyle paints. She was certainly actuated, as Michelet says, by ~~certain~~ theatrical craving, for notariety not uncommon in that type of woman. Another example of Carlyle's weakness in this direction, is found in the study of Madame Roland. He has contented himself with portraying her virtues and has omitted all her faults. She was a fine woman without doubt. Strong, self-reliant, courageous, clever, beautiful, she certainly was, but certainly not the modest unconscious heroine that Carlyle leads us to believe.

"Unconscious of her worth, of her greatness, of her crystal-clearness, genuine, the creature of sincerity and Nature, in an age of Artificiality, Pollution, and Cant." This

panegyric is little short of laughable to anyone who had studied that curious woman carefully. Genuine she was not; she was ever, as Meredith puts it, posing before an internal mirror. Still another example is the way in which he omits the vices of Marie Antoinette, and completely ignores the scheming and malicious side of her character. Perhaps Michelet exaggerates this point, but he is undoubtedly nearer the truth than his rival. In dealing with her, the latter was too much blinded by an instinctive, chivalrous pity for the unfortunate woman.

Michelet, as we see in *L' Amour* , *La Femme*, and *Les Femmes de la Révolution* had a keen sense of psychology, and especially of female psychology, but it does not appear to its best advantage in the work which is being dealt with. This is mainly due to his professed indifference to any actors but *Le Peuple*. His studies of Danton , Mirabeau, Robespierre and Saint Just, are striking, and possibly truer than Carlyle's but hardly so wonderfully alive. As a critic says of the English writer. " The figures of most historians seem like dolls stuffed with bran, whose whole substance runs through any hole that criticism may tear in them; but Carlyle's are so real in comparison, that, if you prick them, they bleed" Michelet can, with a few broad strokes of his pen, paint a man, who is seemingly the same as the original, but he cannot make him live. Carlyle, as we have said, might not

be quite as good in their psychology, but he seems to inspire his creations with the breath of life. Michelet's figures are statuesque, Carlyle's are human.

There is still another curious point to notice in the treatment of characters. Michelet's eyes are so firmly fixed on the Revolution, that he has no interest whatever in the characters once they have left the stage. Carlyle is quite different. He looks on the Revolution as only one act in the drama of mankind, as we have already said, and prefers to follow out the destinies of the actors before and after they have left the stage of this one episode. Instances of this may be found in the characters of Dubarry, Lomenie de Brienne, Lafayette and many others. The English author has a more universal outlook.

For his descriptions, Michelet generally paints with big sweeping lines, tending to ignore or efface individual^dity. (we are speaking only of the Revolution. In L'histoire de France his method is different). Carlyle paints by accumulation of small facts unimportant in themselves. The taking of the Bastille is a typical example of his method. It is a piece of remarkable technical skill. By taking all the small parts played by various^{ou} individuals and welding them together, the writer gives a wonderful impression of reality. In the narrative of the flightⁿⁿ of Varennes, the writer has probably given the most vivid and tense picture in history. It is an amazing

tour - de - force. Another of his favourite methods is the employment of startling contrast. After the grim and stormy episode of the taking of the Bastille, depicted with the greatest possible intensity, we suddenly come upon this. -----

" O evening sun of July, how at this hour thy beams fall slant on reapers amid peaceful wood~~y~~ fields; on old women spinning in cottages, on ships far out in the silent main, on Balls at the Orangerie of Versailles; --- and also on this roaring Hell - porch of a Hôtel de Ville " In the same way we find this love of dramatic antithesis in the flight to Varen^mes, " If we reach Bouillé? if we do not reach him? O Louis! and this all round thee is the great slumbering earth (and overhead the great watchful Heaven); the slumbering Wood of Bondy ---- where longhaired Child~~er~~^{erie} Donothing was struck through with iron; Right ahead the great Northeast sends up evermore his gray brindled dawn: from dewy branch birds here and there salute the coming Sun. Stars fade out, and Galaxies; Street Lamps of the City of God. The Universe, O my brothers is flinging wide its portals for the Leve²of the Great + High + King."

This passage is diviner than any of the beautiful word painting in L' Histoire de France, partly by reason of this wonderful contrast.

In fact, Carlyle's history is far more vivid and poetic than Michelet's. The latter is too busy driving home his

views with exalted enthusiasm and burning eloquence, to give any opportunities for his lyrical outbursts.

We have already referred to the latter's love of personification, one of the signs of his ancestry. Not only is it present in his historical works, but also in his minor works.

As in L'Histoire de France, he frequently personifies France, Germany, and even England, as in L'Histoire de la Revolution Francaise he personifies the people; so he personifies the subjects of L'Oiseau, L'Univers, L'Ocean, La Montagne. These little works constitute a literature by themselves. They belong to no class, they are entirely unique. Those dealing with the home, such as L'Amour, La Femme, Nos Fils, Le Peuple, etc., etc., are hardly as good. In fact the two first-mentioned books are to the Anglo-Saxon mind incomprehensible, and even unreadable, although the former contains many original ideas. The atmosphere of mawkish sentimentality is, however, too strong. It might be defined as an anthology of sentimental platitudes. We see in them what, together with his incurable prejudice, constitutes the most serious fault in his writings - lack of humour.

One seldom comes across a writer of such great gifts so entirely without this ^{important} quality, a quality without which even the very finest authors become wearisome.

This is noticeable throughout his works, but it is not

as fatal in history as in letters, for the events themselves have variety, light and shade; but when the whole work emanates from the mind of the author, his faults and strong points become intensified. Unfortunately, this absence does not stop there, but gives rise to evils as great as itself. It is responsible for the entire lack of self-criticism, and the want of tolerance of other points of view but his own.

It is hardly necessary to say how much Carlyle gains on this point, for his humour is one of his strongest qualities. It is the most original, spontaneous, wholesome, and indefatigable humour of the century. The only writer who can really be compared to him is Rabelais. Voltaire and Swift are too acid to be great humourists. The following words of Anatole France might well be applied to Carlyle:- "The Irony I invoke is no cruel deity. She mocks neither love nor beauty. She is gently and kindly disposed, Her mirth disarms anger, and it is she who teaches us to laugh at rogues and fools whom, but for her, we might be so weak as to hate." This is certainly true of his histories, but in his lesser works it too frequently took on an acrid and unpleasant quality. This is especially noticeable in his political writings. In fact, in this branch of their work we find that both are virulent and vindictive to a remarkable degree. This is quite natural. Carlyle in Chartism and Latter-day Pamphlets, Michelet in *Le Prêtre* and *Le Peuple* (to say nothing

of the Revolution) entered the political arena, a dangerous place, where no poet or philosopher should venture, more especially if he have ideals and disdain of pettiness. Both ~~writers~~ when writing of politics lose their heads and their tempers. As Mr Birrell says, by nature Carlyle is tolerant enough "When his war-paint is not on, a child might lead him, His judgments are gracious, chivalrous, tinged with a kindly melancholy and divine pity. But this mood is never for long. Some gad-fly stings him, he seizes his tomahawk and is off on the trail" Unfortunately in politics, Carlyle is perpetually being stung by gad-flies and is on the trail the whole time. Consequently the effect is not pleasant. The Latter-day Pamphlets have been described by someone as "politics with a sore stomach and a squint". The same might be said of Michelet's *Le Prêtre*. There is, however, one difference between the writers besides the fact that both held radically opposite views. While Michelet held to the same view throughout, Carlyle frequently contradicts himself. In setting his foot in the arena he does not seem to have set out with any of these shields and safeguards called fixed opinions. He has consequently been abused, not unreasonably, with inconsistencies and fallacies. The reason is ~~not~~ not far to seek. No great man can see only one side of a question like the rest of mankind; he is too wide, He is above it all and can see all around

~~At the question.~~ As Mr Shaw says "Constancy never was a great man's virtue".

It is not within the limits of this essay to criticise any words which have no bearing on a comparison between the two writers. Consequently the only field of particular comparison left untouched is that of criticism; but, while Carlyle's critical essays are of great importance in an estimation of his work, Michelet had little or no faculty of criticism, and only touched on it in connection with French literature in the *Histoire de France*. In this connection the French writer does not shew up to great advantage. It is one of the blots on his work. In the section of the work devoted to the Renaissance his criticisms on Rabelais, Du Bellay, and De Ronsard are not only hopelessly inadequate but entirely erroneous.

With Carlyle it was entirely different. Whatever opinion we may have concerning the ultimate value of his work it cannot be denied that he was infinitely superior to his contemporaries. The mere fact that his judgments are to a certain extent out of date, signifies nothing; as Didacus Stella says, "Pigmei Gigantum humeris impositi plus quam ipsi Gigantes vident". It is difficult to over-estimate the value of his studies in German literature, which was not merely ignored but even unknown in England at the time of writing. He may be inferior to Matthew Arnold in restraint

and dignity, while in the more subtle intuitional faculty needed for the highest type of criticism he is entirely lacking. He may not handle a rapier well, but no one can use the two-handed sword to better advantage.

The object of a comparison, however odious, must inevitably be to make some definite estimate of the relative value of the two writers.

To do this impartially we must have some common standard. It will therefore be necessary to make a very brief enquiry into the qualities essential to the historian.

Firstly must come the groundwork of all historical writings, namely, the preliminary accumulation of facts. In this first function, Carlyle and Michelet can claim to rank with the most diligent. The latter's achievement in this connection, is, of course, greater owing to the already stated facilities which he had at his disposal. He was able to ransack the whole of the national Archives of France, and consequently became possessor of material which could not otherwise have been obtained. In the French Revolution Carlyle had only the ordinary authorities to rely on, often incorrect, but in Frederick the Great, his researches could not have been exceeded. *more exhaustive.*

In this first trial, then, both may be said to have acquitted themselves honourably. But this is unfortunately not the only function necessary. The second qualification ^{ication} ~~qualifaction~~

must be the presentation of facts; in the first place, accurately; in the second place, according to the significance underlying the facts, and, in the third place, from the point of view of literature.

In the first of these three, both sin heavily, Michelet particularly in the Revolution, Carlyle, particularly, but not to such a great extent ⁱⁿ as Frederick. In the second, both are ~~again~~ somewhat unreliable. Michelet attempted to ~~resolve~~ problems of this kind by intuition, and was generally successful, although he occasionally made great mistakes. Carlyle hardly ever attempted to trace out cause and effect; he preferred to leave such matters to the historical artisan. In the third requirement, both excel. As a stylist Carlyle has been much abused. He has been reproached with all the faults of grammar and with affectation. This last is assuredly not true; as he himself says, a writer's style is not his coat but his skin; he cannot change it even if he wishes to. To-day it is realised that Carlyle with his many faults and eccentricities was one of the great masters of language in the nineteenth century. In Sartor Resartus he reaches wonderful heights of writing. Francis Thompson's words on Shelley might be applied to Carlyle. in his sublimest moments. "The meteors nuzzle their noses in his hand. He teases into growling the kenneled thunder and laughs at the

shaking of its fiery chain."

Michelet's style is, like his spirit, more lyric than epic. Nevertheless it bears many striking resemblances to Carlyles. He is fond of omitting the verb in a sentence and of breaking off the main sentence and never finishing it. The English writer, however, possesses more idiosyncrasies. Of these the most striking are the German idioms, and the constant employment of dashes, interrogations, apostrophes, and interjections which give his pages the impression of an endless exclamation. Michelet has more elasticity and can adapt himself better to the needs of the moment, while Carlyle's style is not suitable for all varieties of literature. In historical subjects and works, such as Sartor Resartus, he is perfectly in his element, but in his other works there is sometimes need of a lighter and more responsive touch. Michelet's style is more sensitive and ardent; Carlyle is more brutally grand.

Though we may define the function of history with at least some degree of accuracy, any similar attempt in literature is out of the question; the possibilities are boundless, the laws purely arbitrary. Thus it is impossible to estimate the value of literature without the intrusion of the personal views of the critic. More especially it is difficult to judge Carlyle and Michelet by any fixed criterion; both writers of such originality, and both differed so widely that, except for their political writings there is very little comparison possible.

Michelet's minor works while possessing great charm and originality, engender a certain monotony. This is especially noticable in the later volumes of the series. There is not much breadth of outlook. On the other hand, Carlyle, throughout his works, gives an impression of breadth and versatility that the French writer lacks, He has more universality of outlook. While Michelet in his histories thinks of politics, Carlyle thinks of philosophy; while the former studies birds, insects, and nature, the latter studies the human soul.

Both writers have their great faults - Carlyle with his contradictions, dogmatic assertions, and ill-temper; Michelet with his prejudices, lack of humour and vanity. This last mentioned attribute leads him to make remarks that would be laughable if they were not pathetic. It is not a strong self-reliant pride such as with Carlyle, when he says "I could write a better book than there has been in this country for generations". It is not the same vigorous selfknowledge of really great men. When Beethoven, referring to his contemporaries said "they have not the flight of the eagle to be able to follow me" When Shakespeare says "As long as men can breathe or eyes can see so long lives this..." we are not conscious of vanity; they are merely stating the truth, But when Michelet says of the disastrous Franco-Prussian war. - "Dans cet effroyable silence, moi seul en

Europe je parlai. Mon livre.....fut la première et longtemps la défense unique de la patrie" we feel inclined to laugh immoderately.

This vanity is not however individual but national; it is a quality of the French race. This alarming conceit and childish egoism is to be found in many of her greatest writers and more especially in those of the romantic school. It is noticeable to a very large degree in Balzac, Chateaubriand, Lamartine and Victor Hugo. It is a quality not disagreeable in itself, but it is a sign of a great fundamental weakness. All Michelet's worst characteristics, violent prejudices, lack of logic, vanity, sentimentalism, can be traced to that source.

Carlyle's faults are many, but they are strong faults, not weak ones; harshness and antipathy rather than prejudice, pride rather than vanity, sentimentalism, all ^dmodified by his superb humour.

Neither writer had thoroughly mastered what someone has said to be the first lesson to be learnt by authors, namely, learning how to burn one's own smoke. And this then, will probably be the feeling of the majority about them both; the flame was too smoky and sulphurous to have in it the blinding flash of a Shakespeare or a Dante, nor the steady blaze of a Milton or a Schiller, nor ^{yet} the constant jet ^{of} the whitest flame of a Keats or a Shelly^e.

But even if Carlyle was sometimes too shrill, bitter and

misanthropical, even if Michelet was sometimes prejudiced and blind to much real greatness we must not complain, As ^{well} Rus~~si~~ Lowell says, "It is better to be grateful for what we owe an author, than to blame him for what he cannot give us" For there was much nobility in both.

But if a choice must be made, we must make it, after long consideration, in favour of our countryman, not from patriotic reasons, but from an honest attempt to regard both from an impartial standpoint.

Certainly, Carlyle is not of the the greatest. He had not the faculty of expression in all forms which makes the highest type of intellect. He had no *sense* of perfection of *form*, and lacked the reserve and dignity associated with the godlike race.. But in his finest moments, he possesses that divine Shakespearean sympathy with all and sundry, with high and low, which transcends any of the merely human qualities of Michelet.

He looks down on humanity from the Olympian heights, and finds it loveable. Indulgent to everyone, with love for all that is noble, with pity rather than contempt for the despicable, he reaches a height that is accessible to few "But I , mein Werther, I am above it all, I am alone ^{with} of the stars"